AN EXHILIRATING CORPORATE RACE TO THE TOP!

VIRTUAL CORPORATION

Microforum®

Your Guide To The Net

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What is the Net?

Every schoolchild knows about the technical details of the Net and how fibre optics gave way to direct-broadcast satellite data exchange at the turn of the millennium. This guide's purpose isn't technical, but will provide a brief background of the Net itself.

Brief History

The Net is a direct descendent of the Internet, which emerged in the late 1980's as a revolutionary means of communication. The Internet itself was the child of ARPAnet, a military/research network developed in the 1970's. A distinction must be made between these three entities however. While ARPAnet served the purpose of transmitting valuable research and ideas from institution to institution around the world, the Internet was largely a place of commerce dedicated to the free exchange of useless trivia and primitive "home pages".

The Net is the logical and inevitable evolution of these networks. Information is regulated and limited to preserve band-width, and the Net has become a place of enrichment and enlightenment.

Recent Developments

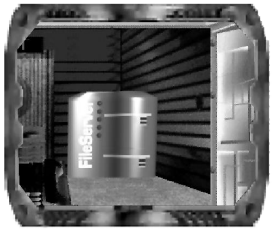
For all intent and purposes, every business transaction on Earth takes place on the Net. Entire virtual corporations have been established. While the main computer servers may be located in a central location, the employees of such corporations may be scattered around the globe. Going to work means little more than "jacking in" in the comfort of one's home.

VUI: The Virtual User Interface

In the beginning, users accessed the Net with clients built on primitive text commands. In the 1980s, graphical user interfaces added the dimension of sight and sound to the Net. However, it wasn't until Pogodyne Systems developed the Virtual User Interface that the user became fully "immersed" in the Net.

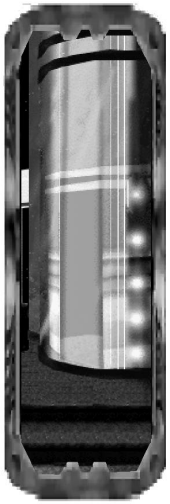
Whereas at one time the Net was two-dimensional, with the VUI, the Net has become a life-like 3D representation of reality. Users can move about, communicate and interact just as they do in reality. For example, you can play a game of air hockey across the country with a friend as if he or she were in the same room with you.

Icons on the Net



Since the Virtual User Interface is essentially a three-dimensional representation of reality, nearly everything you will see on the Net is an "icon". For example:

A filing cabinet on the Net is typically a 3D icon of a computer directory. One need only click on the filing cabinet to view its contents, just like the early graphical user interface computers of the 1980s and 1990s.



An elevator usually represents a gateway to several nodes, just as an elevator in reality is a means to several offices. One needs only to click on the elevator or say “Enter elevator”.

Directory on the Net is exactly the same as a directory in reality. Click on the Directory to view names of people you wish to contact, or you can say: “Use Phone”. You can call them by voice. For example saying: “*Call Linda Worth*”. You may ask each employee several questions, for example: “What’s Your Name?” or “*Do You Want To Play A Game Of Air Hockey*?”

Virtual Boss

From here you can also call up the boss. The Virtual Boss is a virtual representation of Stephanie Owens—president of Pogodyne. She is basically a psychiatrist, always there to listen to your problems. This can help you release stress.

Any of them may give you clues to solve the mysteries surrounding The Virtual Corporation.

The Lisa Unit

The Lisa Unit is a special kind of icon on the Net. She represents a Net-Wide Server Application which handles housekeeping chores and mundane duties. In other words, the Lisa Unit is not a real person, even though she appears to be human. The Lisa Unit is a computer program. Many corporations use Lisa Units as “receptionists”. The Club often uses Lisa Units as filler during slow periods. Think of the Lisa Unit as a prop. If that makes you feel uncomfortable, think of the Lisa Unit as an extra you will encounter many times in many different places.

Conclusion

The VUI itself has changed vastly in the past decade. Pogodyne Systems originally developed the interface with virtual reality helmets and gloves, however, these proved bulky and detracted from the sensation of “immersion”. Within a few years, a development was made which revolutionized computing and the Net itself forever.

Navigating the Net

The BrainStorm™ Neural Emulator

Googol Plex, Inc., created the first BrainStorm™ Net Navigator only two years after the Virtual User Interface was introduced. BrainStorm™ is more than a tool for navigating the Net. It is a system by which the user is connected directly to his or her computer via a jack built into the skull. Monitors, keyboards, mice and other input/output devices became obsolete.

At first, there was a great deal of resistance to this new technology. However, BrainStorm™ has proven to be the ideal computer/human interface. A jack can be installed in a user's head in a minor operation, and usually placed in a discreet location behind the ear.

With improvements in Artificial Intelligence technology, BrainStorm™ has evolved from a simple Net navigator into the BrainStorm™ Neural Emulator. The BNE is capable of anticipating responses from the user in typical situations, and many have come to rely on it for suggestions on how to proceed in a given scenario, even when dealing with other Net users.

While at one time, a mouse could be used to "point-and-click" to a destination, now one need only say, "Go to" and the name of the destination. For example, one only has to instruct Brainstorm™ to "Go to Pogodyne", and he or she will be whisked to the Pogodyne server. Likewise, one no longer needs to select options from a menu; one need only say the option aloud.

In most places, during the game, pressing F1 will bring up a help menu and keyboard options

Using Voice Recognition in Virtual Corporation

To activate Voice Recognition, make sure the microphone is turned on and plugged into the proper jack. When you are ready to give a verbal instruction, press the <SHIFT> key. When you see a message saying, "Speak Now", speak the verbal command clearly into the microphone. If the computer does not understand what you are saying, you can repeat this action. Be sure to speak clearly and at an even tempo.

However, the beauty of the BrainStorm™ Neural Emulator is its hard-wired Artificial Intelligence processor. If you are unable to decide the best course of action, BrainStorm™ will recommend one of several from which you can choose. These options are available at the lower right-hand side of your field of vision.

Using the BrainStorm™ Neural Emulator

To use a recommended option, simply press F1 and scroll through the list of options in the lower right-hand side of the screen with the arrow keys. Press the corresponding number to make the selection. Note that all verbal commands may not be available by this method. Always try Voice Recognition first.

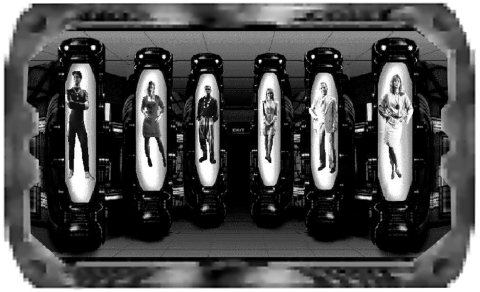
A Message About Neural Feedback

It is true, that in the beginning of the BrainStorm™ Net Navigator, users were often prone to Neural Feedback. Neural Feedback is a phenomenon in which a message from the user's brain is redirected back into the user's brain, or information from outside the user's brain enters the brain without being filtered by BrainStorm™ first.

In either case, the user's brain is typically torn apart from the inside out, since our neurons are incapable of handling the energy generated by Net transmissions.

At any rate, Neural Feedback is largely a thing of the past; Googol Plex has refined the BrainStorm™ Neural Emulator to the point it is capable of detecting potential feedback and filtering it out.

Registering Your Net.Persona



When the Net was entirely text-based, users represented themselves in e-mail and in real-time “chatting” by aliases, also known as “handles” or “nicks”. With the development of the Virtual User Interface, it became possible for users to represent themselves with a Virtual Body of their own choosing. Today these Virtual Bodies are limited to human form. The Ministry of Prudence ruled against the use of animal bodies on the Net because of rampant violation of several morality laws.

Nevertheless, before you can access the Net, you must choose a Virtual Body, a representation of yourself while you are on the Net. Consider this a form of registration with the government, like getting a driver’s license. The body that you choose is how other Net users will see you.

When you enter the Net for the first time, go to the Government Node to register your Net.Persona. You will see a selection of Virtual Bodies. You will notice that each one has a different cost. The reason for this is that each body carries a different level of energy usage; we expect you and other Net users to use energy wisely. To guarantee this, high-energy bodies cost more. You can upgrade your Net.Persona at any time, provided you have the money. It is possible to have a body custom-generated, but this will likely be beyond your means; custom-generation is usually reserved for presidents of corporations and those with friends in high places.

Selecting Your Net.Persona

At the Government Node, simply click on the body you wish to use on the Net. Once you’ve selected your Net.Persona, you are ready to browse the Net!

Checking Your Status

There will be times when you will want to check your status on the Net, i.e. stress levels, energy levels, money and even popularity.

The BrainStorm™ Neural Emulator’s sophisticated user/computer interface monitors your physiology at all times and is capable of detecting stress levels. Life on the Net is often more stressful than reality and many users have literally “burned out,” so be sure to keep your stress levels low. You can do this by taking vacations or by going to the Club or the Games Room to unwind.

Energy levels are straightforward. The amount of energy you reserve decreases every minute you are on the Net. You must purchase energy on a regular basis in order to remain active.

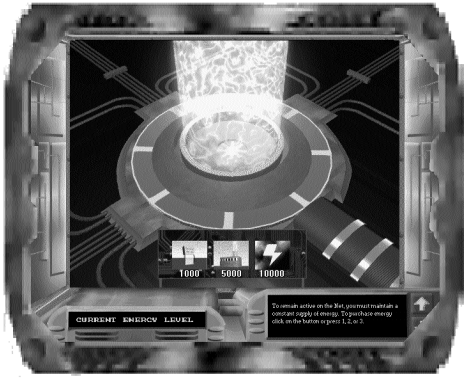
Popularity is a new feature of the BrainStorm™ Neural Emulator. The emulator sends out intermittent signals to the BrainStorm™ units of users you have been in contact with recently. Each signal is a “feeler”, a hypothetical query invisible to the user. Your popularity is based on the number of negative or positive responses your BrainStorm™ unit receives in return.

To check your status, simply press the F2 key

Points of Interest

Here are the major points of interest you should look at while navigating the Net.

Power



Your very presence on the Net draws precious energy from countless servers. You must purchase energy on a regular basis in order to maintain a presence on the Net.

To purchase energy, direct BrainStorm™ to the PowerPlant by saying “Go to PowerPlant”. Once there, select “Purchase Energy”. Credits will be deducted automatically from your account.

Saving a Game

You can only save a game when a job has been successfully completed.

Loading a Game

When starting a new game select “Restore Saved User”, then select saved game.

Net. Police

The Net.Police are your friends. They are there to protect and to serve the users of the Net. If you suspect another user of crimes against the Net, it is your duty as a loyal citizen to report them to the Net.Police. You can do this by saying: “Arrest” or by pressing F1.

The Net.Police is also a good source for virus defeaters. Whenever a new virus defeater is released, you can purchase it from the Net.Police.

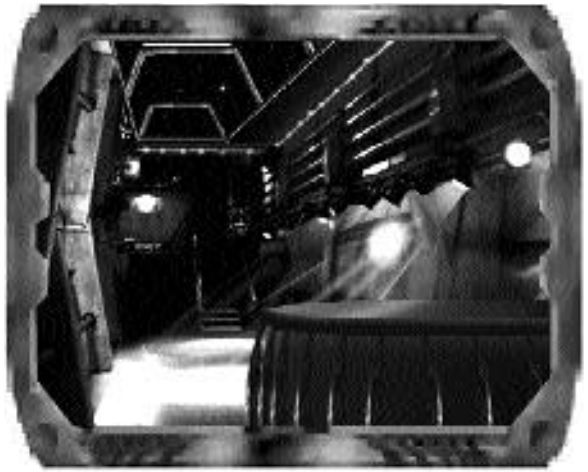
Pressing F1 will give you the possible selections.

You will be rewarded for solving crimes.

Stress-Free Environments

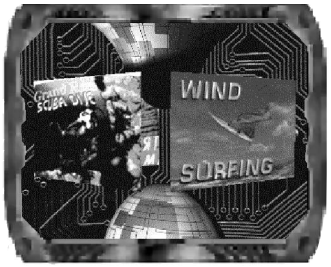
The Net can be a stressful place, especially if you work there. For this reason, places of entertainment and relaxation have been established on the Net to help you cope with the rigours of Net Life.

The Club



The Club is a place to meet friends, toss back a few simulated shooters, and dance the night away.

Vacation



For ultimate rest and relaxation, you can always count on a Virtual Vacation. There are currently four programs available. The vacations vary in price, and they will help you reduce stress and increase popularity.

Ski The Alps

Ski the Alps without leaving your living room, but watch out for rocks!
Tip: The skiing vacation has more than one possible outcome. At a key moment, hit the Left Cursor Key to go left, the Right Cursor Key to go right, and the Space Bar to jump. Depending on the outcome, your stress level may actually rise.

Trip to Mars

Since the collective space agencies of Earth finally gave up on the idea of ever sending a human to Mars, we've provided the next best thing: a trip to the Red Planet via the Virtual User Interface.

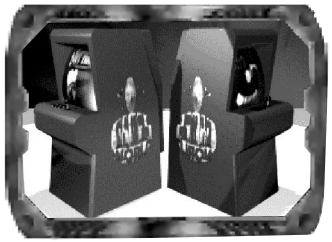
Grand Reef Scuba-Dive

Enjoy a relaxing cruise under the placid waves of the Caribbean, before toxic waste destroyed the natural habitat.

Windsurfing

Windsurf the Caribbean but watch out for those boats. Depending on the outcome, your stress level may actually rise.

Games World



The Games Room is the perfect place for a little one-on-one competition or a test of your own endurance. Playing games will reduce stress and increase popularity.

Pong

Pong is the oldest graphic-based game in the world. Its simplicity and charm has made it the most popular game today.

How to Play Pong

The object of Pong is to get the bouncing ball past your opponent's goal, while protecting your own goal with a paddle.

To move the paddle, simply use the Left Cursor Key to move left and the Right Cursor Key to move right.

Air.Hockey

Hockey is the most popular head-to-head game on the Net. Like Pong, it is elegant in its simplicity. Protect your goal with your paddle and try to get the puck into your opponent's goal.
The current Net.Hockey champion is one Martin Dolgener, an unemployed graphic artist from Berlin.

Controls

To move your paddle left and right, press the left cursor key and right cursor keys.

Netdroids

Net Droid is a game of skill and tactics. You maneuver a tank, by using the arrow keys. The object of the game is to eliminate the other player from the board. Use the Space Bar to fire, collect shields and bullets as you race along.

NETTRACKER

Net Tracker is fast becoming the most popular game on the Net. The game is a simulation of the Net at its rawest: servers and gateways are reduced to simple blocks. The goal of the game is to eliminate an “ICE” (a sophisticated protection program) in order to penetrate a server. You should keep in mind that Net Tracker is a simulation only, although plans are in the works to convert Net Tracker to a fully functional Net application.

How to Play Net Tracker

You navigate the Net with a vehicle resembling a motorcycle. You destroy the ICE by firing at it with missiles. You must avoid the moving pole and hitting the walls.

Controls

Up Arrow Key moves your vehicle forward, Right Arrow Key turns your vehicle to the right, Left Arrow Key turns your vehicle to the left, and Space Bar fires the missiles. Down Arrow Key reduces speed

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Virtual Corporation WalkThrough

- The point of Virtual Corporation is to rise in the ranks of Pogodyne Systems and eventually become President. This is a brief guide to getting started.
- When you first log onto the Net, you must select a Virtual Body.
- At the Government Node, select the Virtual Body you desire with the mouse. When you begin the game for the first time, you will have only have enough money to afford two of the bodies available. As you gain experience and money, you will be able to afford more expensive bodies.
- Once you’ve selected your body, press the Escape key to The Net.
- Once at the core of the Net (the cityscape), say, “*Go to Pogodyne*” (pronounced PO-GO-dine) or select “*Go to Pogodyne*” from the BrainStorm™ Neural Emulator.
- You will warp to the reception area of Pogodyne Systems. The Lisa Unit will appear. Press the Shift key and say “*Apply for Job*” or press F1.
- In a moment you will be whisked away to the interview. Linda Worth will ask a series of questions. Answer clearly, or select the appropriate response from the BrainStorm™ Neural Emulator. When the interview is over, you will leave Pogodyne Systems.
- Shortly, you will receive an automatic e-mail message telling you what, if any, position you’ve been hired for.
- Return to Pogodyne. This time, click on the elevator on the right-hand side of the screen or say “*Enter elevator*”. You will be whisked away to your office.
- People will appear in the monitor on the left-hand side of the desk. To answer the phone say “*Pick up phone*”. They will pose a problem of one sort or another, and you must respond either verbally or with the assistance of the BrainStorm™ Neural Emulator.
- You can check the contents of your directory by clicking on the filing cabinet at the right-hand side of the screen. Likewise, you can look up other characters by clicking on the phone in the centre of your desk.
- To return to the Net, just say, “*Exit*” or select the appropriate option from the BrainStorm™ Neural Emulator, or by pressing F1.

Good Luck!

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